

2012 Brown and Black Bear Activity Summary

General Overview

At Kenai Fjords National Park, we define bear-human interactions as situations when bears and humans are mutually aware of each other, and we classify each interaction as either encounters or incidents. Bear-human encounters include all cases of bears responding to the presence of humans with indifference, curiosity, avoidance, stress, or surprise that do not result in a charge, property damage, or physical contact. Bear-human incidents are bear-human interactions involving damage or loss of property, garbage or food, unusual behavior on the part of the bear, charges, physical contact, and extreme evasive action in response to a bear (such as bear pepper spray or firearm use).

Staff and visitors reported 14 bear-human interactions in 2012, involving both black bears (*Ursus americanus*) and brown bears (*Ursus arctos*). None of the interactions recorded involved injury to humans. The greatest number of recorded bear-human interactions occurred in June (n=6) followed by July (n=3), August (n=2), September (n=2) and May (n=1). Bear-human interactions occurred in the Exit Glacier developed area (n=7), on the Harding Icefield Trail (n=6), and on the coast (n=1). We classified nine of the bear-human interactions as encounters and five as incidents.

In addition to reports of bear-human interactions, notable (e.g. brown bear or female with cubs of the year) or unusual bear sightings (e.g. injured bear) are also documented. A bear sighting or observation occurs when a person sees a bear, but the bear is apparently unaware of the person. While a bear-human interaction is documented on a Bear-Human Interaction (BHIM) form, a bear observation is recorded on a Natural History Field Observation form.

In 2012, park staff and visitors documented one notable black bear observation and 17 brown bear observations for a total of 18 notable bear observations.



Park visitors recorded seeing a brown bear with two large cubs seven times between May and September in the Exit Glacier area including the Harding Icefield Trail. Solitary brown bears were seen another eight times.

Bear Observations

Park staff and visitors recorded one observation of a black bear with cubs in the Exit Glacier area.

Park staff and visitors recorded seventeen brown bear observations, nine of which were a female with two cubs.

This Black and Brown Bear Activity Summary was prepared by Leslie Adams. We wish to thank all park staff and visitors who contributed observations, BHIMS reports, and photos this year.

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Bear-Human Encounters

Park staff and visitors documented nine bear-human encounters in KEFJ in 2012. Eight encounters occurred at Exit Glacier while one took place on the coast in Aialik Bay. Female bears defended their cubs on four occasions, curious bears approached visitors on three occasions, and visitors surprised bears twice inciting two encounters.

Three black bears and one brown bear defended their cubs by exhibiting threat displays including huffing and paw swatting. All four encounters occurred in June in the Exit Glacier area.

Three black bears approached people in a non-aggressive curious manner. At the Exit Glacier area, one bear retreated from visitors after being hazed with claps and yells. Another bear followed a hiker on the Harding Icefield Trail until the hiker created enough distance between himself and the bear to the point where the hiker could no longer see the bear. The third report of a curious bear came from Aialik Bay. Two bears repeatedly approached campers and their bear-resistant food containers despite being hazed by voice and clapping. The bears finally retreated in response to an air horn blast.

Bear-Human Incidents

KEFJ park staff and visitors reported five bear-human incidents in 2012. All occurred in the Exit Glacier area. Bears obtained human food in three separate incidents. A brown bear defended her cubs during one incident. A visitor approached a black bear too closely causing another incident.

A visitor approached a black bear to get a photo but ran away from the bear when the bear showed signs of stress. The bear chased the person and then retreated into the woods.

KEFJ Bear-Human Encounters 2012

Probable Cause	Number of Encounters
Curious	3
Defense of Cubs	4
Surprise Encounter	2



A brown bear female stands with her cub in the Exit Glacier developed area.

Visitors took a brown bear by surprise on the lower trails of the Exit Glacier area. The bear did not demonstrate aggression and was displaced after being hazed with yells and claps. On a second occasion, visitors took a black bear by surprise on the Harding Icefield Trail. The bear exhibited stress but was not displaced.

KEFJ Bear-Human Incidents 2012

Probable Cause	Number of Incidents
Defense of Cubs	1
Food/Garbage	3
Person invaded space	1



A visitor approaches a black bear too closely for a photo at the Exit Glacier area.

The second incident occurred on the lower trails in the Exit Glacier developed area. A brown bear surprised a visitor when it emerged from the vegetation onto the trail and started huffing. The visitor ran from the bear and then hid in vegetation just off of the trail. The brown bear and a cub followed him but were deterred when a park ranger hazed them with yelling. An hour later, six park visitors encountered the presumably same brown bear and her two cubs on the paved trail. The bear charged towards them but halted when the visitors grouped together, waved their arms, and yelled. The bear then retreated into the woods.

Two incidents occurred in which a bear obtained food from garbage cans in the Exit Glacier developed area. The first incident occurred in mid-June while the second occurred in late September. In both cases, bears knocked over garbage cans in the campground and along the paved trails. After the first incident, maintenance staff secured the bases of damaged garbage cans with rebar. After the second incident, maintenance staff secured all garbage cans in the Exit Glacier developed area with rebar.

The fifth incident occurred in the parking lot of the Exit Glacier campground. A presumed black bear broke into a vehicle whose window was left cracked open and obtained human food during the night of September The vehicle received damage to the rear seat, ceiling, and rear window.

Bear Incident Response Team 2012 Activity

The KEFJ Bear Incident Response Team responded to three incidents during the 2012 season. After bears damaged garbage cans and obtained food in the Exit Glacier area, Bear Team members investigated the scene and suggested a course of action that included better securing the garbage cans and emptying the cans nightly until the cans could be better secured. Team members responded when a bear broke into a vehicle and obtained food in September. Members decided on a course of action that included closing the campground for three nights and posting additional signage that warned future campers of the incident. Additional team activity included updating the bear information signs at the Exit Glacier campground and routinely updating the Bear Activity page on the KEFJ website.



Bears damaged garbage cans and obtained human food in the Exit Glacier area.



A bear broke into a vehicle and obtained human food in the parking lot of the Exit Glacier campground.

On Friday, 9/14/12, a bear broke into a vehicle in this parking lot, caused extensive damage to the exterior and interior of the car and received food.

Be extra cautious with food storage:

- Store ALL food and toiletries in the provided food locker, NOT in your car.
- •Do not leave car windows down (or cracked) at night.

WARNING

Sign posted in Exit Glacier campground warning visitors of recent bear behavior.